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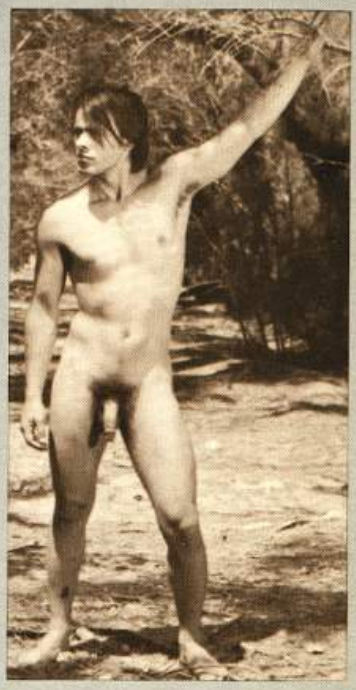
HOMME ON THE RANGE

A Complete Photo-illustrated Novel



adults only

A PLOWRIGHT PUBLICATION

Chapter One

Luke's waking this chilled desert morning was not any different than that of yesterday's or the day before, except that he was going to town after his shower. He pushed back the covers and stretched his slowly waking body. Lowering his hand to scratch his groin he cupped his low hanging balls gently and kicked away the remaining covers. Being sixty miles from the nearest town was more a pleasure to Luke this morning than it was a regret some nights. Yawning, he got out of bed and walked to the door. He stretched some more and rubbed the sleep from his eyes to view the cabins, four in all, just beyond the main adjoining bunk house. The bunk house had eight separated rooms, one occupied by his new corral boy, Jerry . . . probably still heavy in sleep.

The first spray of water needled Luke's firm, lean, muscular body and he let out a yelp from the blast of icy pellets. Soaping up and still half asleep Luke's thoughts drifted to the shower he had taken yesterday afternoon which was interupted when Jerry had come to his house to discuss the new mare.

Yesterday, Luke had been wiping himself dry when he heard Jerry knock on the door. Entering, Jerry called Luke's name and Luke answered that he would be with Jerry in a minute. Swaggering from the bed room still drying himself, he had suggested to Jerry to get the two a beer.

"How's it going, Jerry? Did you get the new mare shoed alright?"

Jerry was half listening as he returned with the beers, watching with the interest of a child the almost naked body flexing in jerky motions while Luke dried himself. "Yes, Mr. Lucas, the mare is shoed and looks good enough for a show. Speaking of the mare, she's in terrible heat and the winking of her ass-hole has the whole corral goin' mad. Are you gonna get a stud for her?"

"You can drop that Mr. Lucas formality, just call me Luke like everyone 'round here does. I'm going into town tomorrow to price a stud for her. She's not the only one who's horny around here, but getting her out of heat will be easier than some of the others . . ."

Jerry laughed as he thought of the mare being mounted by a stud from town and he felt his own cock swelling thickly down his loose pants leg. This made him laugh more, but with embarassment now.

As Jerry stood there Luke smiled noticing the erect, bulging tube in Jerry's pants. He could feel his own cock starting to hang heavier and he reached down to grab the handful of balls in pleasure.

Jerry looked down with embarassment at Luke's half erect and large-headed cock. "I see what you mean by the mare not being the only one who's horny around here." He gave Luke's cock a tug.

Luke laughed and grabbed Jerry's still bulging crotch and felt the warm flesh pulsate in his hand. "You sure don't have anything on the mare's condition either . . ." Luke jutted his hips forward as his cock now stood out fully erect and hit against the hip of Jerry with a thud.

Jerry laughed uncomfortably while Luke unbuckled his pants. Jerry removed his shirt. Having slipped out of his shoes, Jerry stood there fully erect while Luke viewed the young, hard body of this youthful boy in full blossom.

Luke pulled the boy down onto the sofa in gentle silence. Jerry responded to the man's warm touch and felt his self-consciousness ease with Luke's guidance.

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Luke felt himself falling into the youth's dark eyes as he turned toward Jerry on the couch, his own momentarily shrunken cock jerking upward as Jerry's lightly calloused hands pressed under Luke's ticklish armpits. Man! That felt great!

The kid's kiss was sweeter than any Luke had tasted in months. Luke slowly moved over on top, their sweaty balls and cocks crushed together, and Luke aching to slide his ass right down on Jerry's darkly beautiful shaft. He figured he'd need some KY, but before he'd half slid off, Jerry creamed, the first spurt hitting Luke's chin, the rest of it spotting Jerry's stomach, and Jerry's dark eyes looked up like to say, "Gee, I wish I hadn't wasted that!"

Luke laughed and kissed up the spilt cream. "If you can holt on to any more ya got of that stuff while I get some lube, I'd like to see if ya know how to use that tool." He gave the head of it a pinch.

"That was some scene" Luke muttered to himself as he stepped out of the shower. "Christ I nearly shot my wad again just thinking about Jerry. He's a little young, but he's a good kid. I'm glad he decided to work this season instead of head off for a city like he thought he might do when he graduated from school." Better be gettin' out of here before the sun heats this ol' desert into a frying pan ... sure as shit I'll never make it to town in that ol' junk pile of a truck when the heat of the day's at a full." He quickly dried himself and pulled on a pair of faded, worn with age Levi's. He still looked good in these snug fitting demins. He pulled out a faded plaid shirt from the drawer and realized that he had not put on any shorts.

"Hell, don't have time to put the shorts on now, besides the long ride into town makes my balls sweat too much with shorts on ..." He chuckled as he caught himself rubbing the fat pouch falling from his zipper's end, "I ought to stud that mare myself!"

Chapter Two

The early morning sun was just now peaking over the ridges of the distant mountains and Luke could feel the chilled air from the still night being warmed by the sun's hot rays. This mixture felt good to him as he sped down the highway, wind whipping at his hair, making his skin tingle into numbness. "About another hour I should be in Minersville," he thought to himself. "Sure hope this season goes well at the dude ranch. I need to get some patching done on the cabins. My own house could use some paint, too."

Luke had bought the ranch from an old cattle rancher who had lived there for forty years and built the place up when this desert land was used for cattle raising. The years had made their mark on the structures by the time Luke had decided to get out of the city and start a business away from people. He had come across the place about three years ago and had bought it practically right on the spot. After having moved in, he had looked around and seen the work that needed doing. From there he had started, and with only one hired hand to put the place into shape, had opened the following spring. He had placed ads in the newspapers along the West Coast announcing a dude ranch where men could be men, without women and schedules, suits and formality, typical conducted outings, and expensive prices to match. He had wanted to run a ranch where men could come and be what they wanted to be, where they had to work for part of their keep and pay a reasonable amount for the rest. This wasn't to be one of those luxury ranches, this was to be an authentic dude ranch where muscles and nature are a part of survival.

His business had built up slowly through the seasons and he was now doing well enough to have the mortgage paid if this season would equal the last financially.

"'bout half an hour and I should be pulling into town," he murmured to himself. He thought the truck had been lagging for about the last three miles, and now he was certain as a grinding noise whined from the guts of the engine. He floored the pedal and the old truck coughed, sputtered and lunged forward with a jolt and the engine died suddenly. Grinding the ignition while in a coast, Luke felt the starter becoming heated and knew he best not continue or he would run down the battery. He coasted to a halt and stayed on the pavement not wanting to get stuck in the soft shoulders of sand off the road. There was very little traffic at any time during the day and at this hour he knew he wouldn't be a threat on the road.

"God damn this mother fucker... I knew the son-of-a-bitch was not gonna make it! Christ, I

thought I could get it worked over in town. Now what the fuck am I gonna do?" He stood over the raised hood and adjusted various wires, checked the oil, water, and then kicked the old truck in disgust.

"GaahhdD Ddaammnn!!! Here I am away from everything and this fuckin' thing has to break down. Well, guess there isn't anything to do except to start walking toward town and hope for a ride along the way. It ain't likely that anyone would be out now. The sun's too hot for anyone to be crossing the desert. Son-of-a-BITCH!" He walked away from his disabled truck and headed toward town, occasionally coloring the air blue with comments on this new situation.

"'bout an hour and a half I should be poking into town now," he half chuckled at the irony and looked ahead to notice a black speck on the road probably two miles from him. He thought it might be someone driving, but a car from that distance would still have to look bigger than that. As the black figure appeared in closing distance, Luke could see it was not a car at all, but a motor-cycle with a shiny black figure perched on its thrust.

The cycle groaned to a slowing halt and purred to a stand still as the rider called out to Luke, "Need a lift, fella?"

Luke saw the sweat pressed hair fall over the cyclist's forehead and a warm smile as he extended his hand. "Sure could use a lift if you don't mind back-tracking to Minersville. My truck's down the road. It died before I could get it into town. I think the differential's out. Means I'll have to pick up a part in town if the garage has one. Then come back and fix the bugger before sundown."

"My name's Cliff Raven and I'll be glad to take you to town and back. I'm just riding the country for a few months and working the hell out of my B.M.W."

"Sure glad to meet you, Cliff . . . I'm Luke Lucas . . . I own a dude ranch about fifty miles down the road. That truck has just been giving me hell."

The two men laughed and shook hands as Luke climbed on the back of the cycle and felt for a grip. Not finding any, he reluctantly put his hands on Cliff's hips. As the cycle groaned gears and turned toward town, Luke felt the tensing muscles twitch in Cliff's legs. Without intention, Luke felt his cock swell from the closeness of their bodies and the vibrations of the cycle beneath his seat. His thoughts drifted as the muscles seemed to surge with the same power that glided them along the road toward town. The bronze colored skin of Cliff's neck told Luke that Cliff must have been traveling sun-bathed roads for quite a while to have that color, and he wondered if this color might be as dark elsewhere on Cliff's body.

Cliff felt good having met someone his age and even better to be able to help this same someone. He felt Luke's grip and wondered if the man behind him was as strong as his grip felt. He had noticed Luke's slender, but tightly muscled build and also noticed the free-hanging pouch in his pants. Thinking of the contents he felt his own pouch expand, pushing at the black pants and pulsating with the vibrations of the cycle. Cliff admired men who took good care of their bodies. He liked the feel of Luke's closeness and wondered if the two might sometime share in that feeling.

Chapter Three

Having made the trip to the stud farm, garage, and back again to Luke's truck, Cliff helped him fit in the new distributor. Finally they got the old buggy purring again.

"If you're not in any hurry to cross the desert, I have room at the ranch. Maybe you'd like to clean up, rest, get some grub, and . . . "

"Sounds great to me, man. I don't get much chance to scrub the travel dirt off me or my gear. And a bed is a lost friend to me now." Cliff liked Luke, the way he carried himself, the strength and assuredness in his mannerisms. He appeared to Cliff as though he was a man who had made up his mind and was pursuing that quest in stride. Cliff was somewhat the same and responded to the similarity in Luke.

"Follow me on your bike. We should be there in about an hour. Better yet, let's hoist the bike into the wagon and you can ride in the cab." After securing the cycle with rope, the two sped down the highway toward the ranch. The truck didn't seem to be giving any more problems, at least for the moment.

"What's a fella like yourself, your age, doin' stuck out here. Not really stuck, I mean, but living out here?" Cliff asked as the men drove along the highway.

"Well, stuck is what I felt when I lived in the city. Worked there after graduating college four years back. I had a business job for a year and decided then that I wasn't meant for the city life. So, I started dreaming of what I would like to do. I need a business, or at least something to bring in money, but I didn't want to work for anyone. Found this ranch and worked on it 'til I could open it as a dude ranch. What about yourself, why the cross country ride?"

"Got tired of the pressures, the nine to five bit and decided I'd head out west on the bike. There's a lot of country here . . . gives a man a chance to think for himself and about himself." Cliff looked at the profile of Luke and noticed the strong features of his face. He admired the decision Luke had made for himself and wondered if something like this might be the answer to his own wandering.

Luke thought of the man sitting next to him and glanced to look at Cliff. He liked the finely muscled body pushing at the leather. He liked the dark hair falling on Cliff's forehead. He wondered if Cliff had ever really known complete freedom of expression. A freedom that allows a man to be whatever he wants to be, unashamed and natural.

"Don't suppose you've ever been to a dude ranch before? . . ." Luke questioned.

"No, but I've read ads in the papers and they seem more like a resort to me." Cliff answered.

"That's true of most ranches, but mine is different as you'll see."

Chapter Four

The truck pulled into the forked road ahead of them and drove to a halt at the first cabin near the pool.

"You can find the shower behind that door. And some towels in the dresser." Luke said, hauling in the bag roll from Cliff's cycle.

Cliff followed Luke in as he stripped off his shirt. Then he unbuckled his black pants to reveal a black bush of hair springing forth from being matted. He leaned over to pull off his boots and noticed the bulge in Luke's levi's starting to lengthen.

"See ya when you get finished showering, Cliff. I'll go over to the diner and get some grub . . ." With that Luke headed for the door.

Cliff slipped out of his sweat soaked pants. "Sure feels good to be free of those clothes," Cliff thought. He reached down to scratch his balls as he ran his hand the full length of his thick, limp prick. He looked at his cock appreciatingly, "You haven't had a good work out for about a week now. Maybe we can take care of that in the shower."

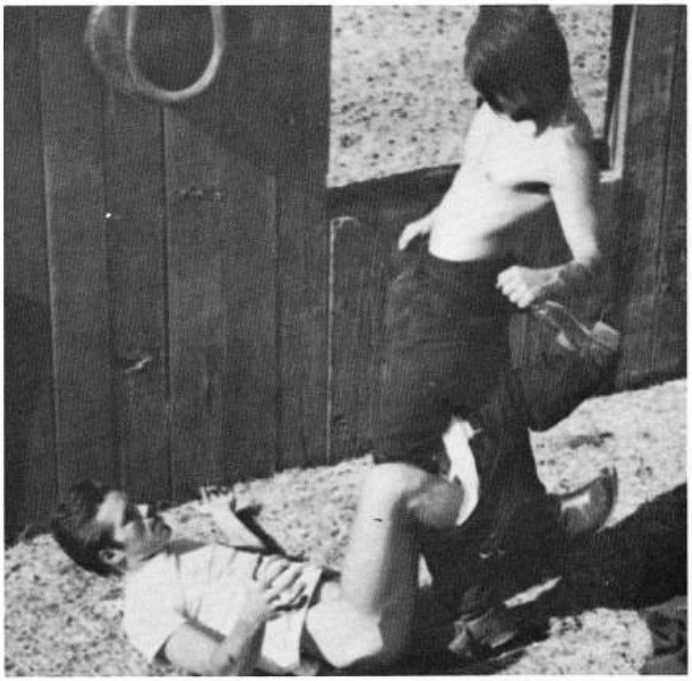
Suddenly he thought he heard a scream. Forgetting his cock, he straightened up, stopped breathing, and listened intently. From somewhere outside he heard another scream. Quickly he put his sweat saturated pants back on and ran out in search of the source of the yells. They seemed to come from over toward the corral. As the wet denim stuck to his legs, binding him, he ran toward the structure. On the ground, he saw a man in his late twenties, somewhat rugged, and muscularly built, gripping two hands that looked as though they belonged to a young boy. He quietly eased himself around the bales of hay to get a better look and he tensed at the sight of the man's reddish, heavily veined cock jammed into the boy's buttocks. Like a limp, wet rag the boy lay face down on the ground. He was passed out from the pain. The man was savagely pumping away, muttering something in the perverted heat of passion. Cliff quickly seized the man by the hair and yanked him backwards sending the man to his back in a thump.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing to that kid, you goddamned animal?" yelled Cliff crushing his booted foot into the groin of the man.

"It's none of your goddamned business what I'm doing," Mack moaned as he tried to get up from his prone position. He took a swing at Cliff's gut and missed as Cliff grabbed a handful of hair and pulled his head bluntly into his knee. Mack felt the blood gush from his face. He kicked Cliff in the balls, lifted his pain-wracked body from the ground and ran from the corral.

Doubled over and breathless Cliff decided he would deal with Mack later. He turned to the boy lying there. He picked him up and headed for the water trough as the boy started coming to. "Don't move just yet, fella, you look like you're going to be sore for a few days. What the hell happened anyway?" Cliff lowered Jerry into the water slowly and washed the cool wetness across his backside as Jerry stiffened in pain and wrenched his face in silence.

Slowly the boy began to feel the water's relaxing effect. "I was watering down Blackie, the mare, over there 'cause she's in terrible heat and Mack, he's the handy man around here, came in and started talking about how he'd like to fuck that there mare and give her a real treat. I told him he'd just better leave the mare alone 'cause she had enough problems. Then he started rubbing his cock and just kept staring at Blackie's winking



ass-hole. Anyway, I threw some water on Mack to cool him off and he started at me like he was going to kick the shit out of me. Hell, man, I didn't mean anything by it, but Mack was pissed and knocked me down over there and said he'd not give the mare any trouble, but his mother fuckin' hot dick sure was gonna give me a good fucking. That's when I tried to break away from him and he hit me across the face. I guess I blacked out."

Jerry rose from the trough looking around for something to use to wipe himself dry. He looked at the sweating, bronze-tanned body of Cliff and said, "By the way, my name's Jerry . . . I take care of the corral, horses, and stuff for Mr. Lucas, err, I mean Luke. Are you new here?"

"I'm Cliff . . . Cliff Raven. Yeah, you might say I'm new here . . . I met Luke on the road this morning. His truck broke down. I'm here to wash up before getting back to the road. I'm cycling around the country for a couple of months."

"Sounds groovy . . . cycling I mean. What kind is that?"

"A B.M.W.," Cliff answered smiling at the boy's childlike interest in the bike.

"I never saw one of them, though I have read about Harley's."

"There's a lot of difference between a chopper and a B.M.W., Jerry. This is a big heavy road bike . . . built for use and not for show." Cliff looked at Jerry's free-swinging cock and smiled.

"If you're here long enough maybe I could get a chance to look it over." Jerry smiled and looked at Cliff's bulging swell and noticed the flesh pushing through the taut pants. "And by the way, thanks a lot for helping me out." Jerry extended his hand to shake with Cliff.

Cliff took Jerry's hand at the same time lifted the boy from the trough and wrapped a horse blanket around his firm, soft body. "Guess I'd better get back to my shower. I was just getting in when I heard you yell out . . . " He now felt his cock swelling as he watched Jerry dry himself with the blanket.

Jerry looked up and caught Cliff's eyes staring. He let the blanket drop to his feet as he felt his body flush in excitement. "Looks like the mare's got you going too."

"I was thinking that I could take care of that in the shower." Cliff now cupped his bulge with one hand and squeezed lifting his head back in a moaning pulse of pleasure. Cliff shoved his hips forward and reached out to touch Jerry's boy-smooth chest. He gently pulled Jerry close to his sweat covered body and noticed the boy following through instead of pulling away. "You sure you want to, Jerry?"

"I've never really had much sex, Cliff but I feel good being close to you. If you'll teach me . . . "

"Look at me, Jerry . . . " Cliff looked openly into Jerry's eyes and slowly their lips met in gentle tenderness.

Spreading the blanket and dropping with the boy down onto it, Cliff worked the boy's cock up, admiring it and going down on it like a starving man. Jerry moaned with hysterical pleasure and shot quickly, forcefully. The raping must have gotten him real worked up.

Breathing hard, Cliff knelt over the passive boy's mouth and thrust his own urgent tool into it. He came like an oil gusher, and still hard, twisted around for a bouncing 69.

"That is probably what Mack was trying to do to you when you blacked out . . . " Panting heavily and sweating now more than before, Cliff lay half on Jerry and half on the hay strewn floor. "What Mack didn't do was to make you relax so you could enjoy it the way I did."

"Did you really enjoy me being in you that way?" Jerry asked in bewilderment.

"I'll show you the way it should be done just as soon as your soreness goes away, Jerry-boy, and you'll know what I mean then. Sex is a pleasure no matter how it's done, but you gotta know how to do it to make it a pleasure. And you want to know how to enjoy sex don't you?"

"I haven't had too much sex as I said before, other than jacking-off of course, but this was great . . . something I never even thought about. If there's more to learn, I sure want to know what it is."

"Not now," Cliff laughed, "you wore me out with that tonge of yours. But we'll have some good times as long as I'm here, Jerry." Cliff kissed him on the mouth, reached into its depth with his tongue washing the warm wet walls of Jerry's mouth with an appreciating kiss.

Jerry caught his breath. "I've never kissed a man before. Shit! I've never kissed anyone before except Blackie and it sure wasn't the fuck like that!"

Jerry came again, and still stayed hard. Cliff stooped over him, flexed his buttocks, and without lubricant, lowered himself slowly over the boy's big cock, wincing as he worked it in. It didn't take long for Jerry to reward him with another warm discharge.

The two men laughed as Cliff pulled his pants about his legs and groin and headed toward his cabin to finish that shower he'd never begun.

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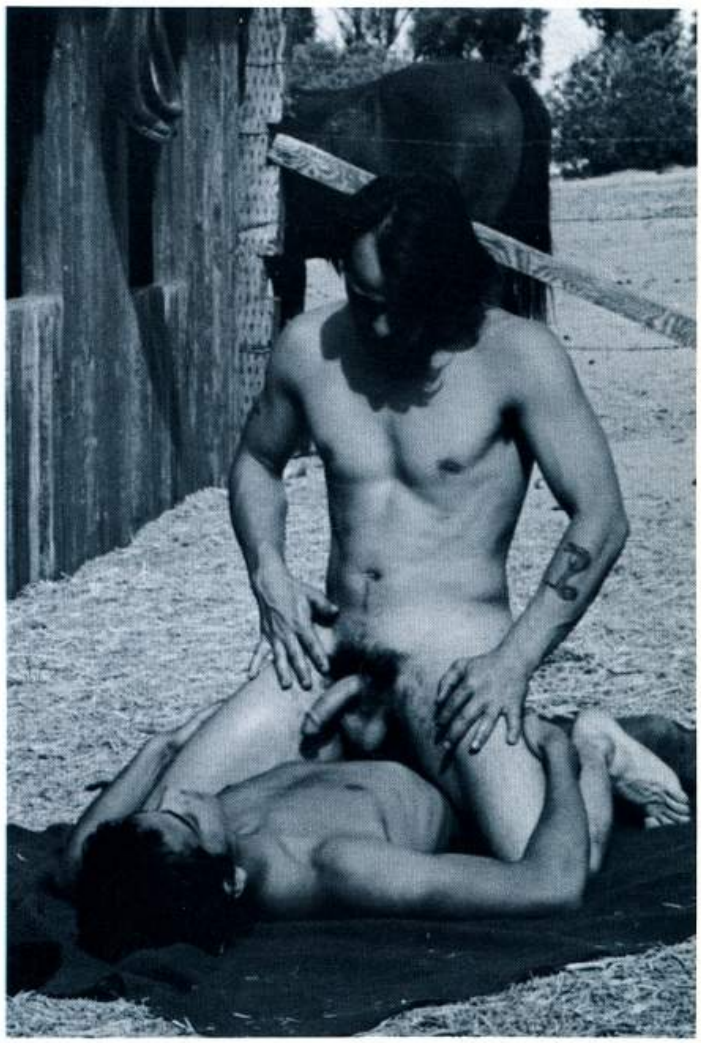

Chapter Five

"Thought you'd left the ranch already, Cliff, until I noticed you didn't take your bike. Where you been?" Luke said in a friendly manner noticing Cliff only in his pants now coming through the door.

"Oh yeah, I guess it would look that way . . . I heard the horse in the corral . . . that black mare you got the stud service for . . . thought I'd take a look before showering . . . sure is a beauty."

"I didn't realize you liked horses so much, Cliff. You didn't mention that this morning," Luke said half questioning, half wondering why he'd even said that remark.

Cliff laughed, "There's probably a lot I didn't mention this morning that I like, but if I'm around here for very long you'll find them out."

The two fellows looked deeply into each other's eyes and then quickly, nervously laughed at that comment.

"Brought you some grub. If it's not enough, let me know. There's plenty more over at the diner."

"Looks like enough food to feed a herd of cattle, not that it looks like cattle feed," Cliff said joshingly. "Guess I better get that shower now before this stink becomes a part of my skin." Cliff slid out of his clothes and looked in the dresser for a towel.

As the water pelted against the shower stall, Luke saw a vision of Cliff's muscular, tanned body undressing again and wondered how that dried come on his cock had come about.

Hearing the triangle bell signal dinner time, Luke called to Cliff that he should join them in the main building after he had showered and eaten. Cliff poked his wet body from the shower. He had his cock and balls cupped loosely in his hand, not so much hiding it as he was fondling the overflowing mass of meat.

"Sure thing, Luke, and say . . . thanks again for your hospitality."

Luke nodded his head and left the cabin, but his thoughts still clung to the mystery of the dried come on Cliff's rod.

Chapter Six

The grub hall, as it was known at the ranch, was for the guests that lived in the adjoining rooms in the bunk house. The guests who stayed in the cabins paid for their food and ate at the restaurant at the entrance of the ranch. Luke had only the grub hall when he first started turning the place into a handsome ranch and soon realized that during the season tourists would stop while traveling the highway for food. Not wanting to have the guests feel ill at ease with interruptions from outsiders, he built the restaurant addition to accommodate the travelers and passers-by. It also brought in extra money as that portion of the ranch could operate during the off season. Soon he was offering the few cabins room service accommodations in the event there might be some guests who felt that they didn't want to eat with a group of men, and it offered privacy to those who wanted to invite a guest for an intimate dinner. This was about as much luxury as Luke thought he wanted to offer on this type of ranch without really turning it into a commercial resort and thus defeat his purpose of offering a natural style of living rather than an atmosphere of vacationing. It was now the slow portion of the season before the nine months of full house and there were only five guests present, four in cabins and one in the bunk house.

Luke walked up the steps of the bunk house and into the grub hall where Jerry, Mack, Steve, Frank, Joe and Hugh were now eating. Steve, Frank, and Joe were guests who had been there for over a week. Hugh was a guest who had arrived several days before.

"Hi, fella's," Luke called out entering the grub hall. "Hugh, I thought we might take the horses out for a ride toward night fall. That blasted mare in heat has them jumpin'. I would be glad to have you along for the exercise if you can make it."

"Hadn't really thought about getting around to riding, Luke, at least not so soon, but I'd be interested if I can get in some swimming practice before the sun sets. I'd like to take off some of this weight I picked up during the past few months in Chicago. So I've put myself on a heavy exercise schedule until I get in shape again."

"What are you talkin' about, man? You're as solid as a brick shit house. I'll be leaving around six if you're still interested. I think Jerry could be coaxed into joining us if we can just get him away from that virgin horse in heat!"

Everyone laughed as Jerry's face flushed. Jerry felt a bit awkward sitting at the same table with Mack and he had relived that earlier scene several times during the course of the meal. He knew, however, that he would just have to live with the situation. "I think I can tear myself away from Blackie long enough to show you how to ride, Luke," Jerry smirked.

Now it was Luke who found difficulty in swallowing his food as the men ribbed Luke.

"And then I'll teach you how to ride, Kid!" menaced Mack, with a grin on his sun-burned face. Jerry knew all too well what he meant by that comment, but he ignored it as the others wondered to what Mack was referring.

The door to the grub hall opened and Cliff entered. Luke introduced him to the men. Hugh's eyes fell immediately on Cliff's crotch. He found a pleasing view of hanging cock pressed firmly against the denim pants leg by the balls hanging fully behind it. Hugh imagined the thickness of the cock as he felt his own cock rising quickly in his tight fitting trunks. He rose to shake hands with the newcomer. As he did, the button popped off the top of his trunks allowing the head of his long dick to shove up toward his navel.

Cliff's eyes caught the rising cock and smiled as their eyes fell immediately locked into a gaze for a few seconds. Cliff felt his own cock strain against the denim crotch and thought he'd better make an excuse and head for the cabin. "I've got a few things I want to do, Luke, and I want to sack out for a while, but I thought I'd stop in and meet the other fella's first."

"Join us on the horse ride about six at the corral, Cliff," Luke said as Cliff headed out the door. Everyone excused themselves and headed in their own directions.

Chapter Seven

The knock at Cliff's cabin door was expected and he answered in complete nakedness. Hugh was taken aback for a moment. Then he entered without saying a word. Like two animals in a summer's heat they tore at each other's bodies in fevered passion furiously working every inch of their strongly muscled physiques into a dripping sweat.

Sweat poured from their bodies onto the sweat-soaked bed holding their quivering bodies wasted in spent passion. Sleep caught Cliff and Hugh as they lay naked spread across the bed. And they still hadn't uttered a word of communication.

Hugh's clothes were still flying across the room when Cliff sprawled on the bed for a sweet mouthful of Hugh's cock — teeth pulling hard at the foreskin. The bed squealed and rocked like an old porch-swing as they went at it. Hugh gently holding Cliff by his long hair, then flipping him quickly over without really pulling. They fell into a rim-

ming 69, Cliff's legs scissoring Hugh's heaving midsection.

Cliff's asshole, sore from months in the saddle and from taking Jerry's big, ungreased cock, twitched severely when Hugh's tongue first touched it, then relaxed and twitched with joy at the soothing penetration. Cliff dug his own firm tongue deep into Hugh's feverish rectum, excited by the musky taste.

The cocks came in to stake out claims where the tongues had explored, Cliff's pressing into Hugh and exploding with cum, then Hugh jabbing and jetting into Cliff, then Cliff back in for a long, grunting ride that had them wrestling all over the bed for an hour until Cliff shot so hard it made his own bowels ache.

Chapter Eight

As Cliff headed toward the corral, he noticed that the horses were saddled and ready. "Where's Hugh?" Cliff inquired of Luke.

"Guess he's still practicing in the pool . . . he said he might not be able to make it. Ready to shove off, Jerry?"

"Sure thing, boss," Jerry shouted coming from the other side of the corral.

The three rode off toward the rocky terrain just behind the main bunk house. "Did you bring your rifle in case we come upon a nest of rattlers?" Cliff asked Luke.

"The peacocks take care of that for us 'round here . . . snakes are their natural enemies and you won't find so much as a grub worm within miles." Luke said.

Jerry smiled at Cliff's ignorance of this fact. "Did you think the cocks were a part of the tropical setting, Cliff!"

"Well, I never thought much about the cock I saw this afternoon being a part of any natural setting . . . just thought it came with the ranch," Cliff smirked to Jerry.

Jerry now let out a laugh that meant more than Luke thought it should toward Cliff's loaded statement, but he let it pass without asking what was really so funny.

Chapter Nine

In the pool Hugh was finishing his scheduled number of laps for the day as Mack headed for the corral. "How's it goin', boy?" Mack shouted to Hugh.

Just finishing up here and should be getting to the corral for that ride this evening . . . " Hugh answered.

"Hell, man, you missed that ride . . . why, the men have already set out for the hills about half an hour ago."

"Oh," Hugh said, "thanks for the information. I might have been waiting till dawn for that troop to start-up."

"There's still the mare left to mount if you're inclined," smirked Mack, "but that may be more than a guy like you can handle."

Hugh laughed as he watched Mack grab at his fat bulging cock and shake it through his pants leg toward Hugh. "Might be at that, Mack, more than I could handle that is," Hugh retorted as he raised himself from the pool heading for the towel to dry himself.

"Well, if you think you might like to try, man, the corral holds more than a mare in heat!" Mack said as he looked proudly at his handful of manlihood and walked toward Hugh.

Hugh never really had much of an interest in Mack, he thought him to be too crude to form any kind of a friendship with, but at this moment he felt the interest rising slowly in him and wondered if all that Mack held in the denims was as good in performance. Feeling his cock starting to swell from the scene of Mack rubbing his crotch, Hugh quickly jumped into the pool hoping the coolness of the water to cause him to go soft again. Mack started to the pool with an expression of lust on his face.

"What's the matter, boy, too much for you to take?"

"Come in here and I'll show you what taking and giving is all about, big boy!"

By this time, Mack was pool side and Hugh grabbed his hand to pull him with full force into the pool. The two struggled in battle for a while until Hugh became somewhat tired. Mack lifted Hugh into his grip and carried him out of the pool. Stripping off his wet clothing Mack now grabbed Hugh's hair and brought his face into direct contact with Mack's stiffening manhood.

"It's all yours, baby, so get to it!" Mack said in a gruff and demanding tone.

Hugh knew that if he played the scene for a while he would be able to regain his strength and break away from Mack, but he wasn't altogether certain that is what he wanted to do. The two bodies joined in this one-sided animal sequence and continued on into a heated and hated contesting of physical pleasures.

Hugh, on his back, struggled for breath as Mack's hard, fat shaft jabbed down Hugh's throat. Never taken by force before, Hugh was gagging with angry resentment, but something else rose

up in him, something half hidden even now, something that enjoyed being raped!

Hugh was wretching, his eyes stung with tears, when Mack's foul-tasting cum churned from Hugh's throat back into his mouth. If he'd had an ax at that moment, he'd gladly have split Mack's skull. But as he got Mack's cum, he shot his own astonishingly full load onto the cement.

Mack dragged him by the hair to a towel a few yards off. An agonized but tripped-out Hugh was on his shoulders with his sore tail in the air as Mack's prick, rock-hard now and doubled in size, jabbed in, nearly busting down the "doorway". Never before had Hugh felt such fire in his asshole! Mack fucked like a battering-ram and Hugh was sure his insides were suffering serious damage, but his spirit was racing like wildfire! Though he nearly passed out with pain and rage, he was liking it!

He collapsed, all the fight gone out of him. Mack kept ramming that club into his ass, turning this way and that, pulling it out for an occasional rest, jabbing it back in (Hugh screaming protest) and coming, hot as molten lead, at least four times — Hugh's nostrils quivering in objection to the wino stench of Mack's cum.

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Chapter Ten

Grabbing his towel and wrapping it quickly about his waist Hugh limped across the lawn and away from the past scene.

"That rotten mother fucker, he's like a goddamned animal! I should kick the shit out of him for having allowed him to abuse me!" Hugh mumbled to himself once inside his cabin alone.

He pulled the towel from his body and probed gently into the dark crevice to feel only a moist, sticky flesh somewhat sore, but not damaged. He brought his hand around to his half thickened flesh and stroked down milking the stem, pinching the flesh, and causing the head to swell with redness.

"Guess I'm still horny . . . " he said to himself as he lay across the bed. His thoughts drifted to the scene of Luke, Cliff and Jerry riding out on the desert. He could visualize the heavy pouch of Cliff hanging down his denim pants leg with the massive balls laying on either side . . . he pictured Jerry's snug little ass cupped by the tight cloth of Levi's and Luke's crotch odor mixing with the leather smell of the saddle beneath him.

Hugh flopped back to the bed and lay there panting as he felt the wetness which covered his body. He closed his eyes to recapture in fantasy the mountain scenes of the three men having sex and he slowly withdrew from consciousness. He now breathed a steady breath of slumber.

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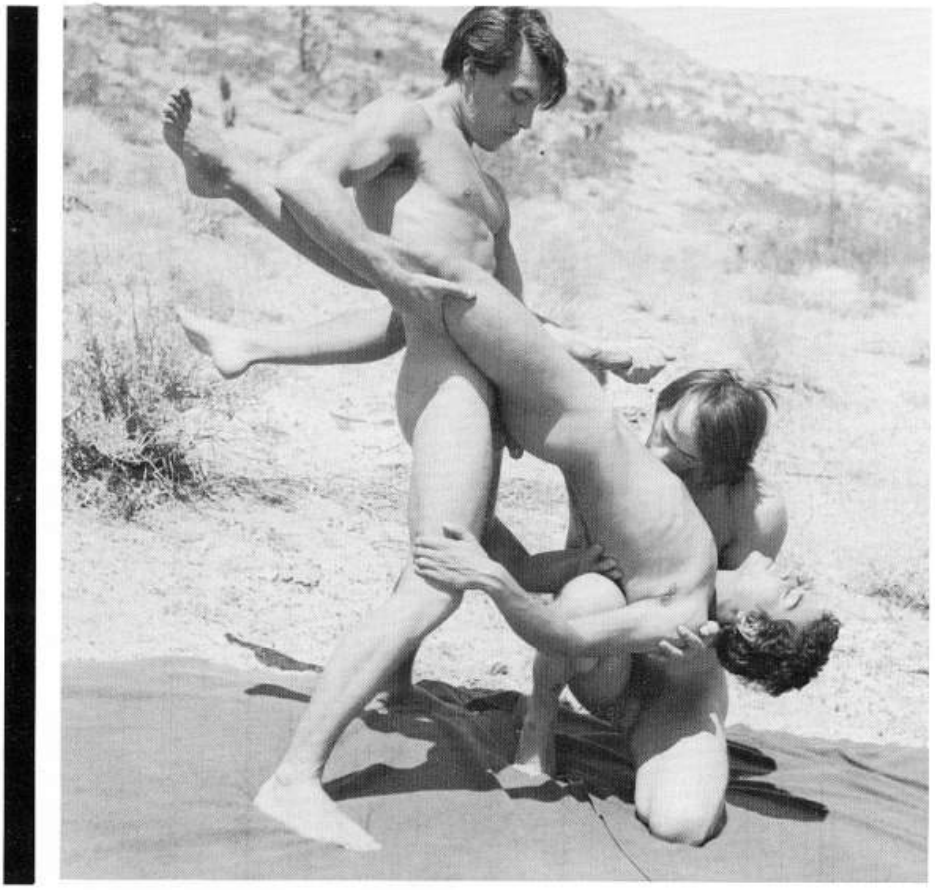

Chapter Eleven

The horses were being brushed down by Jerry and Luke now as Cliff brought out the blankets to cover them from the damp night air.

"What time do you get up around here?" Cliff asked while securing the blanket on the horse.

"Most anytime you want to, Cliff," Luke said, still brushing his horse, "but most everything comes up with the sun, between 5:30 and 6:00. Which reminds me, if you're planning to stay a few days, and you're certainly welcome to, you know, you might help me work on the truck tomorrow as I want to give it an overhaul before the season gets under way here."

"Sounds great if you want to work on my bike when we finish on the truck," Cliff said as he walked the stallion into his stall.

"I'd sure like to help work that bike over if you don't think I'll be in the way, Cliff," Jerry said anxiously.

"Okay with me if it's alright with Luke."

"'slong as you got your chores cleaned up, Jerry, you can work on anything you damn well please," chorted Luke.

"I don't know anything 'bout cycles," Jerry said, "but you said you'd teach me everything you know, Cliff."

Cliff looked deeply into Jerry's thoughts and knew without commenting exactly what Jerry meant.

"Handle this horse for me, Jerry," Luke said, "I've got to head back to the house and go over the books and I better get it done now while I'm thinking of it."

"Okay, Luke, see you in the morning," Jerry said.

"Evenin' men," Luke said as he started toward the house.

"Later," Cliff agreed as he walked Luke's horse into its stall.

Jerry had finished blanketing his horse now and walked it into the stall as he looked toward Cliff washing up in the water trough.

"Why don't you stop over to the cabin when you finish up here, Jerry? I've got a bottle of whiskey just waiting to be cracked."

"Great man!" Jerry said enthusiastically. "See you as soon as I can wash up.

Cliff left the corral and Jerry noticed the sureness in each step of the man he would soon be joining. He idolized Cliff and viewed him as a younger brother would look upon an older, wiser, and close old brother. There was something very warm and natural about Cliff he thought; as though he had known him all his life. Jerry finished washing himself and stayed around to complete some unfinished chores at the corral.

Chapter Twelve

Cliff was slipping out of his pants when Jerry knocked and opened the door. His eyes caught the full hanging balls from Cliff's ass side.

"Come on in, boy. Thought I'd get out of these pants and let the air feel me a bit."

"Fine with me, Cliff. Mind if I do the same?"

"Suit yourself. There's nothing like the feel of night air against your ass," Cliff said joshingly.

Cliff reached into his knapsack for the bottle of whiskey as Jerry pulled off his boots, then unbuttoned his shirt and let it fall to the floor stretching his arms into space and yawning.

"A ride sure can wear you out, man . . . "

He unbuttoned his fly and let the Levi's slide to the floor. He stepped out of them as he walked toward Cliff to take a swig from the bottle. Cliff lay back on the bed and Jerry joined him. The two passed the bottle from time to time talking of Cliff's bike.

"This is some drink, Cliff. I feel light already."

"Guess you're not used to drinking the good stuff, kid, but don't drink too fast or you'll end up puking it all out."

Jerry laughed quietly.

"What's so funny, Jerry?"

"Aw, just thinking about the two of us laying here naked as jaybirds and drinking from the bottle . . . You've got some cock man. Bet you could be hired out for stud service."

Cliff smiled and felt his cock lying between his legs. "You're not so bad yourself, ya know . . . There ought to be plenty around who would welcome service from your poker."

Jerry smiled now and reached over to feel Cliff's limp flesh as he wondered why some men were larger than others.

Jerry moved in fast, his darting tongue sliding over Cliff's smooth hips and thighs, into the deep navel groove, hot down along the right side of Cliff's dark brush of pubic hair and up under the heavy balls, sucking one of them joltingly up into his mouth, then swinging hungrily on Cliff's great cock until he drew out its sweet juice, saving the last driblets of the clear fluid to trace with his finger over Cliff's heaving belly.

Cliff then guided the boy's hips forward, taking the tender, dark meat between his lips, sucking as if to draw out Jerry's soul, both of them almost passing out with delight that seemed too intense to bear.

When Cliff's tongue and then his fingers breached Jerry's hole, so brutally mauled by Mack the day before, he was testing it for sensitivity, but the happy twitching of the boy's buttocks was a welcome sign and a powerful stimulus for both of them. Cliff's cock throbbed painfully as he said with a hoarse voice,

"I want to fuck you, but not if yer still sore. Can I? I promise not to hurt, leastwise, not after the first couple seconds."

"I want you to," Jerry whispered, as Cliff's hands soothed firmly up and down his flanks.

Cliff got up, smeared his upright cock with cold KY and worked half a tubefull into the boy's rectum, then pressed his cock in so slowly, so smoothly that the boy felt no pain, only a cloud-vaulting sense of ecstasy as the steady pumping began and Jerry imagined happily that their bodies had grown permanently together.

Cliff was slow to come. His fully erect cock seemed to him almost numb as the frantic boy begged him to pump harder, as the juice built up behind a dam before the dam finally burst and his tide rushed into the boy.

The two bodies twitched, relaxed, and lay silent and still as their thoughts drifted warmly over the preceding scene.

"You sure learn quickly," Cliff said in a husky gasp.

"Got a good teacher," Jerry said breathing still heavily. "Hope it's as easy to fix your bike."

"We'll worry about that tomorrow, little one," Cliff said as he closed his eyes to drop off into a sound sleep.

Jerry lay there for a few minutes and thought of the seemingly naturalness of this sharing of physical needs, remembering only too well the animal savagery of Mack earlier that day. It was good to feel this way Jerry thought, and he too relaxed into a sleep lying next to Cliff in the confines of the small cabin.

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Chapter Thirteen

The grub hall was filling with early risers this morning and Luke noticed that Cliff and Jerry were not present. He started out the door to fetch Jerry when he saw the two walking together toward the grub hall.

"Morning, men," Luke called out. He thought it strange that Jerry was walking with his new guest, particularly since Jerry's sleeping quarters were in the bunk house. Perhaps there was more of a liberal attitude in Cliff than Luke had been able to surmise so far. Luke had found the man to be intriguing as well as attractive from the first moment they had met. Luke wasn't a passive type person, but he wasn't the type to force himself on anyone he wasn't certain would enjoy or at least accept his desires mutually. Hoping to pick up a longer than usual look, a brush of the hand, or a movement of familiarity, anything that would signal him to approach Cliff without embarrasing either of them, he had thought long and hard about this motorcycle man through the night. It appeared to him that Cliff's relationship with Jerry was that of an older brother to a younger brother and this certainly didn't mean anything more or less. No, he didn't feel that Cliff would object, but he didn't feel that Cliff would accept either. He just couldn't be certain yet.

"Sleep well, men?" Luke asked as the men entered the grub hall.

"Better than any of my nights on the road, Luke," Cliff replied grabbing Luke's shoulder and giving it a friendly squeeze.

"Same here," Jerry said, "except that I haven't been on any road day or night." He looked sheepishly at Cliff, then sat down to breakfast.

"I've decided to have a poker game this evening, fella's, so stop over after seven," Hugh announced.

The silence of morning was broken by this and the men passed their interest concerning the game tonight.

"Got enough cards, Hugh?" Cliff asked.

"I have about six decks, and that should be enough for this motley bunch."

"Bring a heavy money roll, men. I plan on goin' to town this weekend and I'll need your help to make it a good time," Mack piped in.

"We'll see who whips who this time 'round," Jerry said to Mack.

Mack leered and grumbled something as he started to laugh.

"If you're throwin' a party, Hugh, I don't have anything to wear."

Hugh added with a smartalecky grunt.

"Wear your bare ass for all I care. That is if it hasn't been worn out already," Hugh retorted.

"Sounds like a good idea, Hugh. That'll just save me the time in beating the shirt off Mack's back," Luke said.

The men laughed and Cliff said, "If that's your secret on how to win a poker game, I'm all for the shedding of pretense."

"Hell, I could beat any one of you fella's with or without clothes," Mack said smuggly, "and I'll probably get more than your money before the night's over too!"

Luke looked at Cliff trying to find a response in his eyes to Mack's obvious bait.

Cliff just laughed and retorted, "And what more do I get if I beat the pants off you, Mack?"

"You'd be the first," Mack said.

"and how about the last?" Luke added.

"Sounds like it's going to be a pretty interesting game now," Jerry smiled. "I've not played too much poker before, but I think I can get hang of it sooner than I'd except with the stakes being set up now."

Cliff grabbed Jerry's neck and squeezed it. "Hell, boy, you have nothing to fear whether you win or lose."

The two men looked at each other and exchanged blows and laughed at their private joke.

Luke had a fairly good idea now that Cliff was more familiar with the ways of life than he had given him credit for. "Sounds like the boy's been gettin' an education," Luke said to Cliff.

"Shit, man, you talk like some kind of greenhorn who's never been nowhere," Jerry said in embarrassment.

"After tonight you'll know you've been somewhere," Mack cooed.

"We'll see about who takes who somewhere," Jerry said to Mack.

"Well, the card game sounds as though it stands a good chance of being more than just money around the table. I for one can't wait to see some of you jaybirds put your fancy words into action," Luke said. "See you all there tonight and I'll bring the vaseline." Luke headed out the door now.

"You'll be wearin' it home, man," Mack said to Luke as he followed.

The other men headed on their ways without various comments about the game tonight.

Chapter Fourteen

"Can I help you get started on the truck, Luke?" Cliff asked heading toward Luke near the truck.

"Sure thing, Cliff. I was just going to pull out the carburetor, plugs, and points to give'em a going over."

"I'll do that if you want to get started under the buggy greasing the joints and checking out the tie rods," Cliff said.

"Okay, man, but you better change into some coveralls so you won't get your clothes fucked up. You can wear the levi's in the back of the truck if you can get into them."

Cliff grabbed the pair of faded levi's from the back of the truck and slipped his denim pants off. Luke looked at Cliff's nakedness feeling his own manliness swell. He wanted to touch the smooth skin on Cliff's ass and run his hands through the legs and feel the warmth between them hanging there in fullness, but he knew this was not the time.

Cliff noticed Luke's eyes gazing on his nakedness and stretched out his arms toward the sky to let Luke get a longer, better look. He scratched his crotch and said, "The heat sure brings the sweat out."

"Yeah, I know what you mean, man," Luke said.

Cliff slipped the Levi's on one leg and then on the other slowly as he, bent over now, could catch the full view of Luke's bulging, throbbing crotch.

Luke slid under the truck to get started and had only his chest section under while the lower half lay exposed to Cliff's view. Cliff watched the pulsating pouch and felt his own flesh starting to swell. He wondered if Cliff had really been staring at him when he undressed or if the morning piss hardon was the real cause of his erection. No matter. He had work to do and he shuffled the tools in the tool box around until he found the right wrench to remove the carburetor.

The two men worked and talked until nearly noon fixing the old truck as though it was their only joy. They exchanged stories of their lives as though they were friends getting together after a long separation. Luke felt a real closeness working with Cliff and thought him to be someone with whom he could really talk without holding back in reserve. Cliff too felt a complete naturalness in confiding his life to Luke and felt a closeness building between them that was somewhat unusual.

By late afternoon they had the truck put together. They decided to give it a test run before leaving it for another season when Luke would again be repairing the truck. They loaded the tools in the back and climbed into the cab. The truck pulled away from the ranch and tore down the highway toward the desert.

"She sounds good, huh?" Luke commented.

"Like a new born calf," Cliff said as he glanced toward Luke smiling with pride.

They drove down to a side road and headed on it for about half an hour when Luke slowed his speed and pulled the truck to a halt.

"I think I hear the plugs missing," Luke said.

With that he and Cliff hopped out and lifted the hood to look at the plugs. As Luke pulled out the plugs and inspected them one by one Cliff pulled out his joint to take a piss. Luke looked over to where Cliff was standing and viewed the scene with pleasure. He joined Cliff as the two contested to see who could make his stream go farther and arch higher, and they eventually ended the steady flows by crisscrossing their streams of release. The two stood there shaking the last few drops, laughing comradery.

"Like a couple of kids, huh, Luke?"

"Yeah, I guess it looks that way, but a kid with your equipment would be put in a side show."

The two laughed and exchanged blows on the arms as the arms locked around each other for a second. Then, realizing their closeness, they retreated to their distance with a sort of embarrassment.

"Should have this plug regapped in a couple of seconds," Luke said.

Cliff slid under the truck and made some minor adjustments until Luke replaced the plug and closed the hood.

"Should be good as new now," Cliff said as the two climbed back into the cab and started back toward the ranch.

Hugh was pulling himself from the pool as the truck headed toward the house. He wondered where the two men had been, particularly since they were both covered with grease and dirt from having worked on the truck.

He shouted to them, "Better get that grease off your bodies before the game or you won't have to bring the vaseline."

The two men gave him the finger and laughed loudly as Cliff jokingly played like he was cornholing Luke.

Hugh headed toward his cabin to set up the card table.

"Better get a quick shower before supper, Cliff. See you at the grub hall . . . and thanks again for helping me work this old girl over, man."

The two shook hands and looked at each other in a silent, deep look. Cliff started toward his cabin as Luke watched his muscular body chop the air in strides. Luke felt a queeziness in his stomach. He chucked it off to hunger, but he knew it was something more than just that.

Chapter Fifteen

Hugh's cabin stood just beyond the pool. In early darkness of evening Luke could see a nude figure in the uncovered window as he approached in the bare. It seemed natural for him to be in complete nudity and he entered the cabin without shame or being shy.

Hugh, Mack, Frank, and Steve were having a beer when Luke entered and he said, "The others should be along in a minute or so . . . I saw Jerry headed this way from the corral carrying a bottle, I think."

"Have a beer, Luke," Hugh said. "It's a good thing it's a warm night or we'd be freezing our tail bones off."

"And it'll probably get much warmer for some by the time the game's over," Mack quipped.

Jerry entered with a fifth of whiskey and acted somewhat shy in his nudity, but the other seeing his discomfort stared at him as though in a trance.

Jerry blushed a scarlet red and let the bottle fall to his front and cover himself as he asked, "What's the matter, fella's? Did I forget something?"

"Well, if you'll move that bottle, we might be able to answer that," Luke said joshingly.

Jerry handed the bottle to Hugh and looked at his groin. "Nope, didn't forget to bring this guy along, 'though I doubt it would've mattered much if I did forget."

"As long as you brought the good side, kid, then I'd say we can get started on this game of lost virginity right away . . . " Mack said. "Yeah, and plenty of money that will buy me a good time in town tomorrow."

"I've got the money, Mack, but it's likely you won't even get that by the time this evening's over," Jerry laughed.

Cliff opened the door now and entered as Luke's eyes turned on him.

"You got the grease out of your veins, I see," said Luke.

"And you forgot the vaseline, I see," retorted Cliff.

Handing Cliff a beer, Hugh sat down to get the game started.

Slow to start, the men exchanged comments about each other's physiques and who would pay for what during the course of the night. Cliff looked into Luke's eyes from time to time and found it distracting to his game which he was playing more poorly than the rest. Jerry seemed to pick-up most of the change on the table, but it was clear that Mack took the lead in scoring dollars as the hands unfolded. More beer was passed and occasionally the men had to excuse themselves to go to the head.

Luke feeling the mixture of beer and fatigue excused himself much to the surprise of Cliff

"I'll see you fella's tomorrow, if you don't mind, as I feel like hell and have more book work to finish before the season gets under way."

"Sorry to see you cop out so soon," Cliff said.

The other men acknowledged his departure and continued playing. Luke having left made Cliff's attentions more acute and it showed as he started to win back some of the money he had lost so far.

Mack excused himself to go to the head and the others went for more beer from the fridge.

"This is some game. I thought I'd lose for sure, but it looks as though I may be going to town tomorrow night instead of Mack," Cliff said in laughter. "Think I'll head over to my cabin for a few more dollars though. It may be a longer night than I thought . . ."

Cliff started out the door and looked across the moon-bathed ranch grounds towards Luke's house. He could see the figure of a man working over a desk in the lighted window. He thought about going over to talk for a spell, but realizing the game awaited his return, he headed for his cabin.

Chapter Sixteen

Mack was returning from the head with a semi-erect cock and remarking how and who he was going to get paid from first. Hugh remarked that if he was as rough as yesterday he could count him out, and Mack said that the beer had mellowed his animal feelings.

"I'm sorry I was so much of a man for you, Hugh," Mack said feeling himself in full view of the others.

"It's got nothing to do with being a man, it has more to do with consideration of the other party." Hugh said.

"You mean you two went at it together yesterday, too?" Jerry inquired.

"Well, not exactly together. But it's going to be different tonight or there won't be any action," Hugh said to the men.

Hugh was now next to Mack, embracing him and working their passion to a heat. Jerry felt the warmth starting up from his insides and walked over to the two guests and as the three joined Mack and Hugh now lying on the bed. The group of flesh coupled themselves in one way and then another, slowly building a web of meshed limbs writhing in a constant flow.

Opening the door, Cliff spotted the scene in front of him and stood watching for a minute as he shut the door behind him. He continued to watch in interest and excitement as he felt himself becoming more involved in the stimulating scene.

"Come on, man, get in the action or you'll be charged for freak-peaking," Mack said twisting himself around to see Cliff standing there watching.

Cliff shrugged his shoulders and went down to involve himself with the mingle of bodies. Cliff worked on two of the men while he was being sought out by a third.

The orgy went on for a couple of hours and finally broke up with Mack carrying most of the game money home and leaving a somewhat better impression with Jerry and Hugh than he had previously made.

They shifted positions crazily, joining up in ways Cliff hardly believed possible, a mad pile of passionate, sexy fun, with a lot of guffawing and roughhouse thrown in — and even Mack on his good behavior.

Cliff at one point had both Jerry's and Hugh's cockheads in his stretched mouth, Mack's in his ass, another in each hand and pressed against his ribs. They all, Cliff included, came at the same time, sending Cliff reeling halfway over the moon. But through it all, Luke's image shimmered in Cliff's brain, making him want to blot out the others, to escape that tangle of sweaty, sexy, acrobatic bodies.

"Why the fuck ain't he here?" he kept asking himself.

Cliff said his good-byes and headed to his cabin. He noticed Luke's light still on, although he could not see the figure working over the desk now.

"I don't know what this guy has, but I can't seem to get him out of my thoughts. I don't think it is anything like romance. Hell, I've never been that close to romance, but there is something about him that is different from the other guys I've been with. Shit, I haven't even been with him and I don't think he even thinks like that. He would have stayed on at the game tonight for the scene with the men if he was like . . . oh, fuck! What's the sense of even trying to figure it out . . . I'll be heading out of here tomorrow most likely anyway."

Cliff wrestled with his thoughts through the night. Waking periodically and wondering why he couldn't sleep, he wondered even more why he couldn't get Luke out of his thoughts. He walked over to the window and looked in the direction of Luke's house. The light was off now in Luke's window and it looked as though the whole ranch was lost in sleep.

"Maybe I'd better pull out early this morning and forget that this place exists. It's getting me nowhere slowly," he thought to himself and lay back to try again for sleep.

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Chapter Seventeen

The grub hall was absent of Luke while the other fellows were not too talkative and were just eating this early morning.

"Well, it looks like the beer has a hold on all of you this morning," Cliff said to the men.

"Guess it has at that, Cliff," Mack said.

"Won't be going to town to live it up tonight will ya," Cliff remarked to Mack.

"Hell, the lead'll be out of my pants by noon and I'll be off to town soon as Luke gets back with the truck," Mack answered.

"Where is Luke?" Cliff asked.

"He's in town trying to get that stallion down here to stud with Blackie," Jerry said. "Guess he's had enough of that whining horse and her upsetting the whole corral. He left early this morning, just before the sun came up. I thought he'd be back by now, but it looks as if something must've come up in town. We'll need your help if you're stayin' on, if and when he gets back with that stallion, Cliff."

"I'll be here. Couldn't leave without at least sayin' so long to Luke," Cliff said as he headed out the door toward the corral.

He didn't feel like eating this morning, but it wasn't because of the beer he had to drink last night. No, it was something more than that that made him want to be alone for a while.

Luke pulled into the ranch about an hour later and without the expected hitch and stallion. Cliff could see Jerry talking to Luke as he headed toward the truck from the corral.

"Where's the stud, Luke?" Cliff called out, "Jerry said you were bringing a stallion back for Blackie."

"Couldn't get him today, the motherfucker wants too much to stud him with Blackie . . . Hell, I'll stud her myself if that son of a bitch doesn't come down on price."

"What's the matter with your stallion?" Cliff asked.

"They're too young," Jerry answered.

"Yeah, too young and too unhung . . . Poor old girl, she's suffering like hell. It's her first heat, you know," Luke said softly. "Jerry, give her an enema . . . Should help her through the day, anyway."

"It's not good Luke. But what else can we do 'til that fucker comes down on the price?"

"Well, that's what I thought, Jerry. Even though I hate to take the chance of messing up Blackie, I don't think it'll hurt this time," Luke said.

Come on in the house with me, Cliff. I'm pissed and need to cool down with some talk."

"Sure thing, man. Let's have a beer or anything cold," Cliff said.

In the house the two men settled with a beer and sat in silence for a while just thinking about things.

"Did you ever have a problem where you just wanted to explode because you couldn't do anything at the moment to make it better or make it go away, Cliff?"

"Not like the kind you're having, but I know what you mean . . . I didn't sleep very well last night because of a similar feeling," Cliff said.

"Anything I can help with, man?"

"Sorry I brought it up, Luke. No, there's nothing you or I or anyone can do. Just like in your situation, it's only a matter of time . . . the right moment."

Cliff cut off and drifted away in thought as Luke stared at him wondering exactly what he meant. Those last few words about "time and right moment" seemed to carry more weight than they should ordinarily have. He found Cliff a very strong and handsome man, an equal in many ways. A man he respected, or at least had learned to respect through the course of their chance meeting. He wanted to put his arm around Cliff's shoulder . . . but he didn't feel that Cliff would really take it the way it would be meant. This newcomer, this cyclist who had helped him, this drifting man sitting across from him now was a strange one to Luke. Something strongly attractive about him there was, but something unapproachable seemed to linger in the very air about him. What was there that held such a degree of intrigue? Luke didn't know, and though he had thought about it from the first moment he'd met Cliff he also felt a reservation not to pursue any of his questions for an answer. Some men, Luke knew, could open to another man without pretention or guardedness and with a naturalness that made for a common bond, but, then, there were those other kind of men who couldn't open to anyone, and he assumed Cliff to be this kind of man in many ways, though he wasn't actually certain of this fact.

"Here I am lost in thought and it's you who has the problem . . . sorry for the cop out, Luke." Cliff said, catching himself in tranced thought.

"No worry, Cliff, the stud will be here and that problem will resolve itself . . . seems like anything does given the time, and like you said, the right moment."

Cliff looked into Luke's eyes wondering many things and unable to say any of them.

And Luke didn't break the stare as he, too, had many questions to be asked without speaking.

The knock on the door broke this moment and Luke called for the intruder to come in.

"Luke, the mare is giving me a hell of a time. Could you help me? Mack's at the diner and the others must be off somewhere 'cause I can't find anyone," Jerry said.

"Be right over, Jerry. Bind her down with ropes at the ankles. But not too tight, hear?" Luke said.

"Can I help?" Cliff asked.

"Won't take long Cliff. Why don't you have another beer and relax till I get back . . . I shouldn't be too long. Just have to brace Blackie and give her the hose, Jerry can handle it from there," Luke replied.

Cliff started toward the kitchen as Luke looked at him for a second half wanting to say something, anything, but instead he started out the door toward the corral. Cliff sat down again thinking of this situation . . . how it came to be and why he was so involved with really nothing.

"Guess I've detoured my journey long enough. I'll head out of here before Luke gets back. That way things will resolve themself in time."

Chapter Eighteen

Cliff made up his mind and headed for his cabin finding himself running more than walking and half laughed at his feeling of running. Inside the cabin it didn't take long to get his things together and start out the door for his bike near the house. Turning around the truck to reach his bike, Cliff suddenly stopped.

"What's the matter, Cliff?" Luke said, standing by the bike.

Cliff stiffened and regained his composure as he looked passed Luke.

"Nothing man, just getting restless and thought I'd be better off tearing down the road."

"Without at least shaking hands, Cliff?" Luke asked with a hurt in his voice.

Cliff looked directly at Luke now and tried to think of something to say to cover up this moment of defenselessness.

"Without at least shaking hands, Cliff?" Luke repeated.

Feeling the pressure of this question, Cliff blurted out, "I didn't say I'd stay on forever, man. I'm crossing the country and this time happens to be the time to leave. So please, Luke, don't make anything more of it . . ."

Luke looked pensively at Cliff and knew the answers now to the questions he had been wanting to ask. He felt a helplessness in this situation . . . not wanting Cliff to go, but not wanting to try to stop him if he did want to go.

"Sorry, Luke, I didn't mean it that way . . . I mean, you've been great and everything, but I . . ." Cliff stammered for a minute and fumbled with a cigarette while trying to think of the words, the right words that would let him get on his way, far away from this something he didn't really understand.

". . . I don't know, maybe the beer has me thinking funny. I don't know what it is, Luke . . ."

"How about one more beer, or coffee if you want, just as long as you can leave and I can let you leave without this scene here? You know what I mean, Cliff?"

Cliff didn't answer, but continued to pack his bike and ready himself for the departure.

"You've been good, Luke. I appreciate it, don't misunderstand me . . . I just think it's time to leave. A drink or postponing it wouldn't make it any easier."

The two men stood in silence. Cliff felt a stirring warmth working its way up from the pit of his stomach. Luke was unable to find any words that had meaning enough to say to Cliff. Looking again at each other they extended their hands and slowly shook hands. Cliff mounted the bike and tore out off the ranch without looking back.

"Son of a bitch!" Luke muttered, "There should have been something I could have said to make Cliff realize that . . . that I really do want him to stick around for a few more days."

Luke felt heavy and wanted to explode, but he didn't know how. Or why. He felt he just wanted to let himself go, leave this place for a while, try to forget, try to think. He headed for the stable thinking that a ride would help ease his clouded feelings. Where he would ride didn't matter so much as just getting away from the ranch, from the men, and maybe even away from himself for a little while.

Chapter Nineteen

As Cliff sped in high gear over the pavement, the sun pounded down on him making the sweat pour out heavily. "Why the hell am I headed back for Minersville?" he thought in anger, "and what the hell am I so heated up about? I got my way, I left . . . that's what I wanted."

Something seems wrong about this situation . . . this leaving Luke . . . I mean the ranch," he caught himself thinking. His thoughts drifted in and out of the past few days with Luke and the ranch, with Jerry in the corral, Mack in the poker game, Hugh in the cabin, the other guests. All these men seemed nice enough to him, the kind you could meet on their level and exchange whatever for however long and walk away feeling that you had taken and given equally. But with Luke . . . with Luke it was something different. Not really like he was threatening his freedom of movement, but perhaps there was more of a responsibility, more than just a momentary action, more than sharing surface desires. Maybe there was more of everything in this man whom Cliff found elusive. Whatever it was, Cliff wasn't going to allow himself to think about it for much longer. He had made the decision to leave the ranch at this time and he was now on the road, free again to do as he wished. "But I was free before, anyway, so what the fuck am I running from?"

Chapter Twenty

Jerry watched Luke bridle one of the stallions and ride out over the rocky terrain behind the corral.

"Wonder what's buggin' Luke, he didn't even speak?" Jerry thought to himself.

Luke disappeared from view and Jerry decided to saddle up and follow him, to catch up with Luke and perhaps find out what was bothering him. Jerry had grown to respect and like Luke as a man as well as a boss. It disturbed him to see Luke in this different mood . . . a mood Jerry didn't understand.

Riding for about a mile, Jerry thought he had lost Luke until he noticed the hoof tracks winding around a large boulder. Riding his horse around the boulder, Jerry saw Luke sitting, smoking a cigarette and staring off into the distance.

"Want some company, buddy?" Jerry said softly.

Luke looked over his shoulder to notice Jerry standing there. "How come you're out riding when there's work to be done?" Luke snapped. Jerry looked hurt for a second.

"Sorry, Luke, I saw you leave the ranch and you didn't look none too happy about it. I thought maybe you'd want to talk or something."

Luke looked at Jerry. This young boy had only wanted to help ease Luke's discomfort. He knew he had said the wrong thing in snapping at the boy, yet he realized he couldn't really discuss the matter directly with Jerry.

"I'm sorry for snapping at you the way I did, Jerry . . . I have some things on my mind and I guess I'm in that kind of mood. Sit down." Jerry sat on a rock at Luke's feet. "Want a cigarette?"

"No thanks, Luke. What's buggin' you, man?" Jerry watched as Luke shifted himself to bend his knees and take a long draw on the cigarette.

"I wish I knew, Jerry. Cliff pulled out about an hour ago, I guess I'm gonna miss him . . . kind of. It's not often when a man meets another man that he can . . ." Luke lapsed into silence.

"I know what you mean, Luke. Cliff is a hell of a nice guy. I'm sorry he didn't come 'round to say good-bye."

"He's more than a nice guy, even if I can't put my finger on it, Jerry. He was in a hurry to leave. I'm sure he meant to say good-bye, but I just happened to catch him leaving. He seemed upset about something."

"Seems odd that Cliff world try to leave without saying good-bye to you Luke. I mean I know how much he liked you. Hell, we all knew that."

"What do you mean, WE ALL KNEW THAT, Jerry?"

"Well, I just mean that everytime you were not studying Cliff, Cliff was studying you. Hell, after the card game the other night we all stayed around after the orgy and talked about your leaving before anything got started. Cliff walked in on us while we were all going at it and he didn't seem too anxious at first to join in. And I'm sure I heard him call out your name when he was coming."

"I didn't take that talk seriously, I mean about the business of everyone getting together. I thought it was just part of the talk, not like it was planned or anything."

"It wasn't planned, Luke. It just happened, I guess . . ."

"And Cliff really joined in, huh?"

"Cliff's a man, Luke. He taught me a few things and how not to be ashamed for being myself. Hell, you were fun the night we got together, and Cliff was the same way. Thing is though, Cliff looks at you differently . . . I mean, I think he sees more in you than . . ."

"Well, I'll be a son of a bitch! Here I was thinking all this time that Cliff didn't really go in for natural desires and he was into it right under my nose. Boy, have I been a fuck-up!"

"Is this what was bothering you, Luke?"

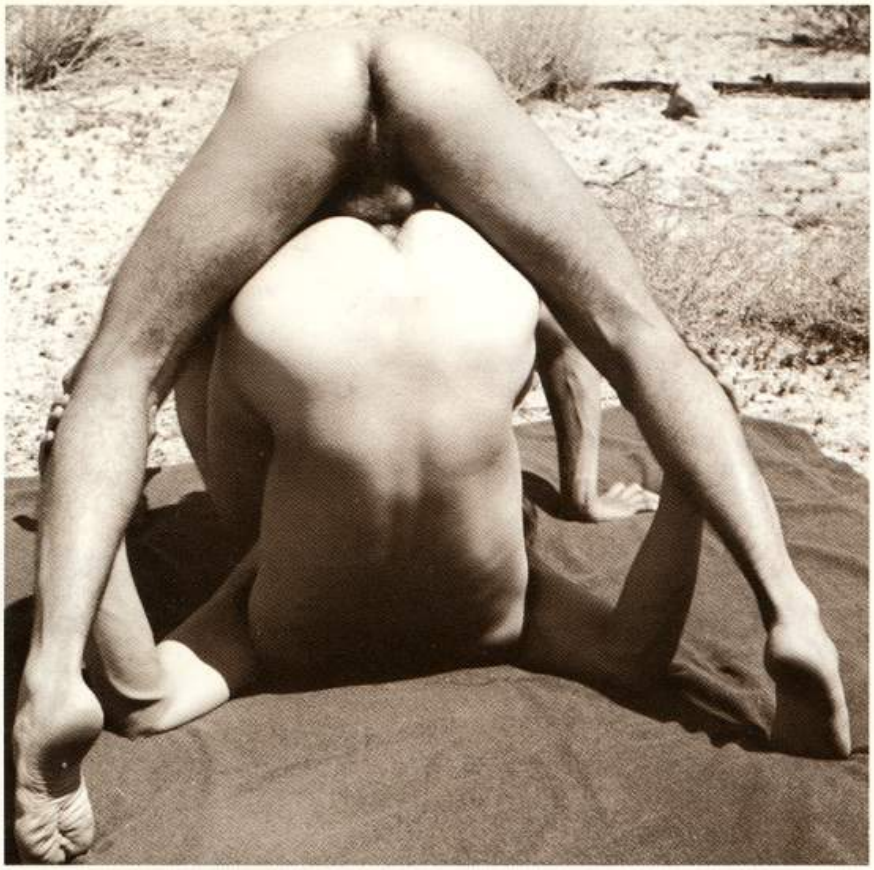
Luke reached for Jerry's hand and pulled the boy close to him. "I guess you've taught me more about myself, Jerry. Yes, this was bothering me and for quite a while. I guess I think a great deal more of Cliff than I have been able to put into words. And I guess I have been a little afraid of seeing what he felt toward me. He's gone now and there's nothing I can do to change this fact. You see, Jerry, we all have to learn and I guess the hard ways teach us the most."

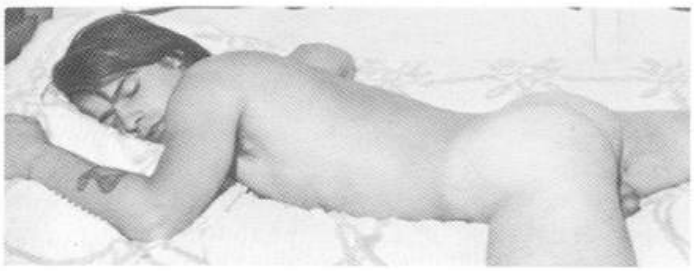
His whole body stirred to an orgasm-like feeling by the thought that Cliff had wanted him, Luke drew Jerry so tight he almost cracked the boy's ribs. He felt he was going to cry — something he hadn't even thought about doing since he was a kid and some older boys called him "Nanny Mae" and gave him a beating.

He'd learned to hold his own after that, and now he held Jerry in trembling embrace while he collected himself, cussed himself for a real stupid prick. But being held by someone who's about to cry is unbelievably stirring sexually — it really triggered Jerry's responses. He comforted Luke while the trembling was heavy, suspecting it was Cliff that Luke was hugging in his mind. Jerry's cock got harder than ever before, then with a playfulness Luke had thought foreign to the boy, he gave the man a fucking he'd never forget.

Back and forth they went: three different kinds of 69, then Luke cornholing Jerry with the boy standing on his head, wiggling his tail like a duck shaking water off, and finally, Luke still hard in the boy's rear while drinking at the boy's ever-flowing fountain.

(Continued on page 46)





Chapter Twenty-One

Cliff lay in his motel room listening to the radio wondering why he was even there. He had gotten no further than Minersville, and though he didn't need sleep, Cliff had decided to get a room and think out things in the isolation of a dark, restful room. He rested for a few hours and was awakened by the sound of a singer from the radio singing about giving a damn.

"Sounds like they're playing this song for me," he thought, smiling to himself. "Well, there's only one thing to do and I guess I'd better do it so I can get on my way again," he said out loud. Lifting the receiver from the phone, Cliff asked the operator to connect him with the dude ranch.

"Hello . . ." Cliff heard from the other end of the line. He paused a second now wondering what he was going to say, wondering why he had even called.

"Luke?"

"Yep?"

"This is Cliff . . . I'm in Minersville . . . at a motel. I wanted to call to say that . . ." he hesitated.

"Cliff, you don't have to say anything" Luke struggled trying to find the words in his anxiety. "I think I already know. I'm glad, Cliff, I'm really glad. The ranch is still open to you, Cliff . . ." Luke braced himself as he asked hesitantly, "Come back' fella?"

Cliff put down the receiver and lay there for a minute trying to get his head clear.

Luke was still holding the phone in his hand as he felt a knot swelling up in the pit of his stomach. Cliff had not even said he would return. He had not really said anything at all. Maybe Luke was too impulsive. Maybe Cliff didn't call to say what Luke thought he was going to say.

Luke felt foolish for having been so forward. He put down the phone and went into the bedroom to lay on the bed. "Maybe I can fall asleep and forget this whole Goddamn scene," he thought as he buried his face into the pillow.

Chapter Twenty-Two

"Cliff!" Jerry shouted as Cliff pulled into the ranch. "I thought you had gone . . . for good I mean." Jerry bolted across the ranch ground toward Cliff.

"Hi, little guy," Cliff said turning to face Jerry. He walked slowly toward Jerry and opened his arms catching the boy and swinging him off his feet. "Couldn't leave without saying good-bye to my buddy, could I now?"

"Luke said you meant to . . . I mean when I spoke with him this afternoon he told me . . . Well, what I mean is that we talked and . . ."

"I think I know what you mean, Jerry. Where is Luke now?" Cliff asked releasing Jerry from his gripping embrace.

"Haven't seen him around. Guess he must be in the house. Does he know you were coming back?" Jerry asked, half smiling.

"No, I don't think he does. What's so funny, smart-ass? Is there something I should know?"

"Oh, no, Cliff. I was just thinking how glad Luke will be to see you. He was a little down today, after you had left, I mean."

Jerry pointed in the direction of the house, winked at Cliff, smiled and walked back toward the corral whistling as he pictured the scene of Cliff and Luke together in his mind.

Cliff knocked lightly at the house door. He stood for a few seconds and then opened the door and entered half expecting to see Luke. Quietly he headed for the bedroom and paused before entering the doorway.

"What am I doing here?" he thought to himself, "just being here because I want to be here!" he answered.

Taking the final step toward the sleeping body on the bed, Cliff felt his heart pounding as he

looked silently at Luke. The sight of the slender man stretched out on the covers, holding a pillow with one arm brought a warmth and a smile to surface from Cliff.

"Luke?" Cliff whispered, still standing there looking down at the peaceful body. "Luke?" he said more loudly now.

Luke's eyes opened slightly and he turned his head to the direction of the sounds he thought he had heard. Half dreaming and half waking Luke opened his eyes wider now as a flow of warmth ran through his body. Luke turned to look at Cliff and couldn't find the words to speak. Even his feelings were somewhat confused now as he slowly extended his hand in silence.

Whatever it was, however it surfaced, it didn't matter now . . . the two men communicated in actions, actions that said all the words that they had wanted to speak for a long time now, actions that said more than any words could promise.

Time was an endless thing at this moment and not something that threatened to separate them. No time to make promises with soft words and darkened rooms . . . no time to limit the boundaries they were to discover in breathing the same breath . . . no time eating away the desires of honesty to one's own self. Time, only time, was the key that allowed these two men to discover . . . and time, infinite as the imagination, took them somewhere for a little while . . . and told them tales of cowboys and wandering ones . . . and spoke of the silence in consent. Time, the seductor and the seduced . . . Time, the ruler and the ruled . . . Time, the maker of memories, situations, and moments . . . rare, beautiful, and few, gentle and warm . . . Time, the ultimate provider, capable of stealing away . . . in time.

NOT FOR SALE

TO MINORS